

**Illinois River Coordinating Council
January 24, 2008 Meeting Minutes
Brookfield Zoo
Brookfield, Illinois
1:30 pm**

Call to Order:

Marc Miller, Office of Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm, and welcomed members and guests.

Roll Call:

Marc Miller called the roll:

Citizen Members

Doug Blodgett, The Nature Conservancy; Daphne Mitchell; Dr. Wendell Shauman, Illinois Farm Bureau; Lee Bunting, Illinois Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts; John Quail, Friends of the Chicago River; Richard Worthen

State Agency Members

Director Chuck Hartke, Illinois Department of Agriculture; Terry Weldin-Frisch, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO); Rick Mollahan, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Marcia Willhite, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Ex-Officio Members

Matt Sprenger, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Colonel Robert Sinkler, US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District; Colonel Jack Drolet, US Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District; William Kruidenier, University of Illinois, College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences; Chris Urban, US Environmental Protection Agency; Jon Hubbert, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Don King, USDA Farm Service Agency; John Rogner, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Erick Johnson, US Coast Guard

Approval of Minutes

Marc Miller requested a motion to approve minutes from the October 2, 2007 meeting held at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Peoria, Illinois. Daphne Mitchell moved to approve, Marcia Willhite seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Opening Remarks

Lt. Governor Quinn gave his opening remarks, welcoming the council to his 20th Illinois River Coordinating Council meeting.

Lt. Governor Quinn discussed his hope that water issues would be included in the capital bill. He noted that the Senate version of the bill did little to address the water infrastructure needs of the state. He also hoped to pressure federal officials to fully fund the Illinois River Basin Restoration Projects.

The Lt. Governor noted the progress of nature based tourism in the state, and noted a meeting with Dale Hall and John Rogner from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Lt. Governor hoped that the “Mud to Parks” program would continue to be funded and noted its good work throughout the state.

Member Comment Period

Marcia Willhite commented that \$17 million was cut from the federal budget for the capitalization program. This cut came at a time when it is estimated that \$10 billion is needed for infrastructure in the next 20 years. The EPA also will be issuing their annual report in early April.

Colonel Jack Drolet reported that the dispersal barrier for keeping invasive species out of the Great Lakes was included in the new Water Resources Development Act, and is now fully funded by the federal government.

Lee Bunting reported that some of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts received some of their operating money, but that others were running out of money.

Wendell Shauman emphasized the importance of the rivers as a transportation system for the agricultural industry.

Jon Hubbert said that the (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) EQIP program had received some funding.

Doug Blodgett reported that the University of Illinois at Springfield was opening a field station at Emiquon.

TMDL Project for Salt Creek and DuPage River – Stephen McCracken, Director of Watershed Protection, The Conservation Foundation

Steve McCracken presented an overview of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) projects taking place in the Salt Creek and DuPage River area. The project involves comprehensive biological survey and chloride reduction.

The area, which is heavily urban, requires continuous monitoring of dissolved oxygen (DO) levels. HDR Engineering has been hired to do a feasibility study to determine the cost benefit of dam modification or removal of Churchill Woods Dam and construction and operation of in-stream aeration projects on Salt Creek and the East Branch of the DuPage River. Other components of the project include public meetings, website creation, cost estimations, and discussion with public officials.

Lt. Governor Quinn mentioned the Dam Safety Initiative and said that Churchill Woods Dam may be a dam to look at for that program.

Director Hartke inquired about the purpose of the dam, and was told that the purpose was unknown.

Zoo and Aquarium Partnership Update – Dr. Alejandro Grajal, Senior Vice President for Conservation, Education and Training

Dr. Alejandro Grajal presented the council with an overview of the zoo's work with water.

The Zoo and Aquarium Partnership for the Great Lakes (ZAPGL) is a group of 39 Zoos and Aquariums from Canada and the United States who are joining together to leverage audiences (30 million visitors) to care and act for the restoration and conservation of the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The methods used for this include policy/advocacy, science/conservation; and education/public outreach.

Although these zoos and aquariums are in Great Lakes Provinces and States, many do not officially reside in the boundary of the Great Lakes watershed. They all do, however, belong in some watershed, for instance the Brookfield Zoo is in the Salt Creek watershed, ultimately headed toward the Mississippi River, and Gulf of Mexico. Basically what is good for the Great Lakes will serve other freshwater resources as well, so ZAPGL's work transcends the Great Lakes.

Our second annual Zoo and Aquarium Partnership for the Great Lakes meeting (January 15-17, 2008) had representatives of 22 zoos and aquariums as well as resource people from federal and state agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations. On the agenda for the next two years of operation, ZAPGL will work to institute and fund the following projects:

1. Web based policy advisories that are understandable and timely to the zoo and aquarium constituency concerning water resource protection, and how they can participate and protect the Great Lakes and rivers.
2. Development of an interactive, computer based Watershed Portal, that will be available as an interactive exhibit, to educate participants about their ecological address,

their watershed and their impacts on it. This will also include conservation rewards and links to local watershed work, agencies and opportunities.

3. Each member of ZAPGL will commit to a science-based conservation project locally, for example restoration of watershed or wetland areas, citizen-based endangered or invasive species monitoring, protection of endangered species and habitat in collaboration with other zoos and governmental agencies.
4. Development and implementation of public outreach programs - such as how to have a water festival when you are far away from the river or lakeshore.
5. Implementation of K-12 classes that will be made available throughout the Great Lakes states and provinces on freshwater resources and the Great Lakes by ZAPGL.

Chicago Waterway System, Disinfection and UAA – John Quail, Director of Watershed Planning, Friends of the Chicago River

John Quail reported about the transformation of the Chicago River from an industrial waterway to a healthy habitat is an ongoing process. The Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) is reviewing improved water quality standards for the Chicago River and Calumet River systems. The UAA was a five-year study by the Illinois EPA that looked at the river's use and potential use as a part of a review process required through the Clean Water Act. From their research, the Illinois EPA determined that the Chicago and Calumet systems are due higher water quality standards that would better support current and future use by people and aquatic life. If approved, the standards will result in the most significant water quality improvements in over 20 years.

Affected waterways will be the Chicago Area Waterways: the Chicago River, its North Branch and South Branch, the North Shore Channel, the Cal-Sag Channel, the Calumet River system, the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, Lake Calumet, and the tributaries in an area extending from the metropolitan Chicago area to the Lockport vicinity.

Disinfection is the term for the processes that can be used to reduce the amount of bacteria and pathogens that are discharged in water. St. Louis and Memphis are two cities that are being required to disinfect by USEPA. High temperatures have a negative impact on fish populations.

Lt. Governor Quinn inquired about the method of disinfection, and was told that UV disinfection was the preferred method by Friends of the Chicago River.

Map Review and Symposium Preview - Colonel Robert Sinkler, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Colonel Sinkler previewed the symposium at Bradley University on March 9, 2008, and encouraged everyone to attend.

State and Federal Legislation Update

Marc Miller discussed some of the current, relative legislation in Congress and in the State Legislature. He talked about the Farm Bill and WRDA and the State Revolving Loan Fund. He stressed the importance of infrastructure through WRDA.

Daphne Mitchell moved to draft a letter in support of State Revolving Loan Funding and Dick Worthen seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

Other Business

No other business was discussed.

Public Comment Period

Nick Nikola from the Salt Creek Watershed Network gave an update on what the members of the Salt Creek Watershed Network have been doing in the watershed and making the public aware of issues facing the watershed. He hopes to change the attitude about the creek from a sewer to a vibrant ecosystem.

Valerie Spale from Salt Creek Greenway and Save the Prairie commented that the prairie in the area was a wonderful area and discussed the work they were doing to preserve and revive it.

Patty Werner from Lake County Stormwater Management commented that she was deeply concerned that the Upper Des Plaines Ecosystem Partnership is not receiving any C2000 funding for their projects.

Adjourn

Lee Bunting moved and Daphne Mitchell seconded a motion to adjourn. Marc Miller adjourned the meeting at 3:20 pm.